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Hints to the young men of
Great Britain

London

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TO THE

YOUNG MEN OF GREAT BRITAIN,

ON THE

PROGRESS OF POLITICAL OPINION.

BY

ROBERTS HAMMERSLEY, ESQ.

"God has given us a country of which to be proud, and that freedom, greatness, and renown, which were handed down to us by our wise and brave forefathers, bid us perish to the last man, rather than suffer the land of their graves to become a land of slavery, impotence, and dishonour."
Cobbett's Advice to Young Men.

London:

WAKELIN, SHOE LANE,

(ONE DOOR FROM FLEET STREET,) AND ALL BOOKSELLERS.

HINTS

TO THE

YOUNG MEN OF GREAT BRITAIN.

In every nation throughout Europe the domination of Aristocracy is giving way before the onward march of Democracy. Everywhere men begin to set themselves against the political perversions and wasteful misrule of the few;—that few who arrogantly claim to sway society because their fathers have been participants in despotism. But it is here, in Great Britain, that Democracy has made the largest strides; it is here that Democracy is still pressing forward with a vigour and rapidity that no resistance can withstand, however that resistance may be directed by those blind men who dream over ancient records, instead of reasoning upon the plain matters of fact around them.

The last two periods of five years in this country have deducted more from Aristocracy, and added more to Democracy, than the whole of the two preceding centuries have done, although those centuries are characterized by the advance of civilization and reason; and every succeeding period of five years will be marked with such transfers of power to a far greater extent.

There is but one imaginable way of arresting the movement, which is to annihilate the Press, to destroy all machinery, and to sink every vessel fit for commerce. When this is done, Democracy may be arrested; but not before.

Aristocracy will continue to struggle against the inevitable surrender of its old usurpations; but while its desperation, and consequent denunciations grow, as they will, stronger and stronger, its power of resistance will soon dwindle down to impotent Parliamentary protests.

It is of little importance how many may resolve that Aristocracy shall continue in this country,—still it must pass rapidly away; for, while men pursue their individual interests, think about the means of arriving at them, and communicate their thoughts to each other through the countless channels now opened, Democracy must of necessity advance with a constantly increasing impetus.

Democracy is not the result of speculation; it is not something to come and go, as praise or blame may cause it to be liked or disliked; it is the simple, necessary result of a nation's developing her mental and physical resources to a very great extent, as Great Britain is now doing. This fact has been manifested by the passage of the Corporation Reform Act. Imperfect as it is, this Act is by far the most Democratic measure ever passed by the British Parliament. So evidently, indeed, did discussion show forth its Democratic character, that Lord Melbourne was forced,

in order to support the Bill, to declare in the House of Peers, that Democracy was not only necessary for local Government, but that we had arrived at a period of intelligence, when it was inevitable.* Now, what man, or what association, or what class of men, had taken steps to procure for this Bill a Democratic character?—None whatever. Not many days previous to its introduction in the Commons' House, the Ministers had not an article of the Bill written; and what is more, Lord John Russell did not fully comprehend the Bill, or foresee its tendencies when he presented it. The Ministers were compelled to take some great popular step; Corporation Reform had been loudly demanded, and they adopted a draft of a Bill, with which an accident furnished them, cutting down, according to their notions, its Democratic tendencies, as much as they thought the intelligence and wants of the town population would permit. Ministers gave as little as possible, but they knew that the population of the towns would be highly dissatisfied with less control over their own affairs than the Bill gave them;—hence its Democratic character. As it has been with this, so will it be with other necessary or Democratic measures. For all measures are Democratic which allow men to manage their own affairs—all are Aristocratic which give to a few men the power of controlling the actions, the business, and the purses of the rest of the community.

Young men of Great Britain, look around you; observe well the development of mind connected with every interest in society; observe the acuteness of calculations and reasoning in business, and the untiring activity with which men pursue their interests; observe, too, how readily and efficiently men combine, when this is requisite for their interests. Then reflect how absurd it would be to expect that this intelligent and busy people could go back to a state of ignorance and comparative inactivity, to suit the country to an Aristocracy, now that an Aristocracy is no longer suited to the country. Yes, reflect well upon this subject; and when you have done so, review those plans for the future which you all have more or less distinctly formed.

Young men are apt to dwell upon certain parts of history, and to wish they had lived in by-gone days, to have been partakers of the great deeds they admire. But the past comes to us in false colours, dressed up and painted by imagination and superstition. There is little recorded in the past that, when properly viewed, reason or humanity can approve. We live now in days a thousand times fuller of opportunities to do great deeds, justly so termed; to aid in developing man's true character, to aid in rendering him in every way the intelligent, the virtuous, the happy, and happiness-conferring being which, under all obstacles, he is ever prone to be.

Past struggles have been, in almost every instance, the low

* This is also the opinion, or rather the conviction of M. DE TOCQUEVILLE, the author of "Democracy in America."

contests of barbarism and semi-barbarism, or the mad and demoniac ones of superstition. It is true that *liberty* and *freedom*, *God* and *religion*, were in men's mouths; but this did not make barbarism and superstition the less productive of human misery. The present struggle, in which you may participate in great deeds, rightly so called, is of a higher character; it is between political virtue and political vice, between upshooting knowledge and old incrustated ignorance, between principles that seek the happiness of all—the misery of none, and principles that look only to the license and luxury of the few, at the costs of the misery of the many; between young and honest Democracy, and old, libertine, debased and debasing Aristocracy.

And in this struggle you have not only the opportunity of sharing in great deeds, but the certainty of receiving all merited reward. Happily the days have passed, but hardly passed, when almost everything that could tempt youthful ambition was in the gift of Aristocracy; political distinction, wealth, fame, all were dispensed by Aristocracy, for services to the Aristocracy. In 1832, however, there began to dawn, though dimly, a new era in this respect. Political distinction, at least, must henceforth come from other hands—the hands of the People. Those of you who are at all believers in Aristocratically-written History, do not be startled. Aristocracy has told you many falsehoods of Democracy, spoken repeatedly of what Democracy has done, and slanderously of what Democracy will do. But recollect that Democracy, limited or unlimited, never did exist till after the year 1776, when it was established by Englishmen in North America. God grant that the whole world may be as prosperous and happy as the Anglo-Americans.

By the way, British Aristocracy tried to crush Democracy after it was established in America, and failing in the effort, tried to make Englishmen detest it; and failing again, they in their political references, seem utterly to forget that young and flourishing England, whose identity with us is shown even in her navy, which sails in proud equality of excellence with our own.

In former days, during the high domineering reign of Aristocracy in this country, tradesmen, literary men, professional men, politicians—all looked up in slavish hope to the gold-filching fingers of our titled masters; and oh! how painfully debasing must have been the dependence of a man of talents on the smile, perhaps, of an ignorant animal, with "a coat of arms, a motto, and a name." But still worse was, and is now the inward condition of "those who have risen from the ranks of the People, and been adopted into the Aristocracy." What a debased and craven thing is an *adopted Aristocrat*, and most of all, he who receives a title! Let us view him a moment.

Born Aristocrats grow up in certain beliefs of their caste—absurd enough, it is true—but which seem to them indisputable as the truths of religion. Their associations are all of one colour; recollections of childhood, of youthful manhood, are all

in harmony with their arrogant position in maturer years. Not so with an adopted Aristocrat. His early thoughts and habits are all of different hue; his opinions and feelings are all to be changed. Recollections of his boyhood, of his young and innocent days, come but to mortify his pride. What to all other men, the Democrat and Aristocrat, "is sweet as water to the parched lip," is to the adopted Aristocrat bitter as black gall. Every tie, however pure, however sacred, is broken or loosened; he is an unnatural being, striving perpetually to tear from his breast that which all the rest of the world cherishes with the fondest memory.

But to show how low, how servile, how ineffably mean, they become, adopted Aristocrats are, in many places ashamed of their best friends, of their nearest relations, and even of their mothers. Think but for a moment of a man being ashamed of his own mother—of her of whom he is? I could curse the avoicer of his mother as the vilest reptile on earth, if I did not know that such a wretch is ever doubly cursed, with the contempt of the Aristocrats he serves, and with the gnawings of his own cowardly thoughts; and if, too, I did not reflect that all such villainies is the natural fruit of the existence of an Aristocracy in any country.

The adopted Aristocrat relies, before others, on the reflected consequence of his Aristocratic association; before Aristocrats themselves, he having repudiated Democracy, has nothing to rely upon but subservency to his superiors, and thus becomes a slave—downcast, truckling, and miserable, while he hypocritically wears the smiles of apparent happiness. His days are filled with degrading hopes and fears of social and political dependency; his nights bring him tormenting retrospections, that burn his cheeks with almost maddening shame. What would he not give in those bitter moments, had he remained an honest Democrat? who has nothing to be ashamed of before the world or alone, relying upon his own intrinsic qualities, borrowing no dastardly aid from other men, standing erect, respecting himself and commanding respect from Aristocrats themselves—Aristocrats, whose titles he despises, whose arrogance he contemns, and whose immoralities and miserable hypocrisies he pities.

Happily, I say, the days have passed when Aristocracy had its uncurbed course; the young man of ability may now aspire to distinction without degradation: by every step he takes he may increase his own happiness and independence of character, while he contributes to the happiness and elevation of all around him. For as Aristocracy offers direct encouragement to extrinsic qualities, and thus debases the human character, Democracy offers direct encouragement to intrinsic excellence, and thus develops and elevates it.

What a field for permanent and honest distinction is now opening for the young men of Great Britain! every untitled young man, with a spark of sympathy for the cause of human happiness, or with the slightest desire for his own elevation,

should mix himself in the present political struggle, and manfully aid in gaining the great and peaceful victory of Democracy over Aristocracy. This every one may do, to various extents, in many ways; few persons, indeed, have any conception how much may be done by any man who resolves to exert himself in honest sincerity, even the humblest and most diffident. Listen to the admission of De Lolme, that great apologist for British Aristocracy and Parliamentary corruption.

He admits "It is not fortune, it is nature, that has made the essential differences between men: and whatever appellation a small number of persons [the Aristocrats], who speak without sufficient reflection, may affix to the general body of their fellow creatures, the whole difference between the Statesman, and many a man from among what they called the dregs of the People, often lies in the rough outside of the latter: *a disguise which may fall off on the first occasion*; and more than once has it happened, that from the middle of a multitude in appearance contemptible, there have been seen to arise at once, great men.

"Time and a more favourable situation, to repeat it once more, are therefore the *only things wanting to the People*." Thus, in the last century, did De Lolme prophecy, and truly prophecy. The People have, since he wrote, had time to improve incalculably by the aid of the Press, fettered and confined as it has been, and still is, by the Aristocracy; and the People of Great Britain are at last in this "favourable situation" to show that it is, indeed, not fortune, but nature, that makes the essential differences between men.

Young men of the people, it is now your acknowledged and inviting privilege to mix yourselves with all that is going forward in the politics of your country. Do so as brave, honest, and intelligent beings. Read, study everything political; think for yourselves; associate together in every possible way, and learn to speak in public. No man knows what he is till he tries—ay, and tries, too, after repeated failures. Every philosophic man knows perfectly well that the great cause, now the almost sole cause, of any apparent inability in the mass to handle well all great political subjects, is the want of bravery to try their mental powers. Then, once more I say, associate together in every possible way, speak out to each other your thoughts; many and many a man will be surprised at his own powers.

In the true spirit of Democracy, every young man, who is in a more "favourable situation" than another, should aid that other to improve himself; every one who has more knowledge and more access to sources of information than another, should communicate that knowledge and diffuse that information. Wherever he is, wherever he goes, he should, in every way, encourage and assist others to improve themselves. The good to the cause of human happiness that thousands of young men have it in their power thus to do, will grow up incredibly before their exertions, and it will prepare them for still greater, more extensive, and eminent usefulness. But begin to do good to

your political brethren, and two facts will very soon be evident to you: one is, that great exertions in the cause of political virtue are in nowise incompatible with your regular avocations; the other fact is, that when you have once tasted the pleasure of doing good to others in brave sincerity, nothing on earth can afterwards keep you idle, or make you indifferent to the happiness and improvement of those around you—beings who have the same wants, physical and mental, and the same capabilities with yourself.

Think, not, however, that you can pursue without opposition the mild and beneficent course to distinction which I would recommend to you. No; be assured that, in all your efforts, you will encounter the opposition of that craven set, the *adopted Aristocrats*, in even a greater degree than you would those of the Aristocrats themselves, did you come in contact with them: obedient slaves are always more intolerant than their masters. But it is from yet another class of beings that you will meet the greatest amount of annoyance, a set of creatures too low to be much described, and almost too contemptible to be named—the apers of Aristocracy. These things crawl after all that is Aristocratic, and talk of little else, though never, but by accident, in the slightest contact with Aristocracy, and then the poor apers tremble in idiotic abasement. Treat both these sorts of creatures as they deserve; give scorn to one, and contempt to the other.

Byron says—

"Man makes that great which makes him little."

Young men of Great Britain, by your vigorous exertions hasten on the approaching day when that line shall be wholly inapplicable to your political condition. ROBERTS HAMMERSLEY.

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